

# The Flower of Faith

Read It Here - Then See It All In Motion Pictures

This Fascinating Story, from a Scenario by Charles and Frank Dazey,  
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It Will be Shown at Leading Theatres Everywhere Soon

With Jane Grey Starred as "Ruth Judson"

and

Frank Mills Featured as "Hugh Lee"

Novelized by Jane McLean



Jane Grey

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INSTALLMENT I  
Chapter I

EPHRAIM JUDSON was a hard man. His was the religion of the Pilgrim Fathers, hard, grim, with none of the softer, holier, faith that religion of the simpler kind implies. His idea was to force religion upon the unwilling, lashing the unbeliever with fiery invective and threatening him with dire punishment if he did not succumb. And his methods did not end in the pulpit, for he carried his sternness into his own home and had brought up his children to fear the Lord.

God the Father, was to Tom Judson just another tyrant like his own parent, but Ruth was different. Ruth knew only the love and sweetness of religion, the terror her father described in his sermons passed over her head for she was too simple to realize them. One morning in late spring when life was loveliest in the Cumberland mountains, Ephraim Judson drove his covered wagon containing a few simple household things, over the rolling hill country where in a little valley town he was to conduct a series of revival meetings for the simple hill people. Tom sat in the back of the wagon, his shock of straight unmanageable hair bent over a book. To the casual observer the title of Tom's book read, "Gospel Hymns," but only Tom knew that the loose cover slipped off and inside was tucked away a most thrilling detective story.

Ruth had left the wagon to gather daisies. "Hurry," called Tom, raising his head from his book to beckon to his sister. "You'll be left."

"Not if I know it," Ruth responded joyously, and with a little running jump she sprang into the wagon. Tom reached a hand to help her, and as he did, the book dropped from his reach, and disclosed to view the ten cent thriller.

"Tom," Ruth breathed, looking up suddenly. She cast a swift glance at her father, but he was absorbed in his thought and did not look around. "Where did you get this book?" she demanded.

Tom snatched at it jealously.

"It's mine," he said hotly. "Give it to me, I say."

"Oh, Tom, be careful," Ruth whispered. "If father knew, I don't know what he would say."

Tom, once more in possession of his book, laughed softly. He knew that Ruth wouldn't tell on a fellow. But Ruth sighed. She hardly knew what to make of Tom. Of late he had seemed to be drawing away from her influence and there was a secrecy about his actions that she was not used to. Tom was not bad, only weak. Left alone, his intentions were of the best, but under the influence of a strong character, Ruth feared for her brother. Sometimes she wished that her father were different with Tom.

"He could do so much for him," she would sigh to herself. "But Tom just won't be driven, and when father gets that hard set look on his face, I am so afraid."

The wagon began to pass a few scattered houses, and Ruth was child enough to forget her troubles in the excitement of the arrival.

As the wagon drove slowly into the town, the crowds began to gather. The yearly revival was a matter of the greatest importance to the hill people. It was practically the only influence from the outside world that affected their peaceful lives, and each year there was a lively contest as to just which family would have the honor of boarding the Evangelist. This year the honor had been awarded to Mrs. Sapphira Byrd. She and her fat son Dicky were among the first to rush forth and greet the strangers.

Ruth peeped shyly out of the wagon at the friendly faces, but her shyness soon wore off at the hearty welcome she received. Deacon Harvey, the richest man in the village, and the shining light of the church, was in the throng. Dick stared at Ruth in open-eyed amazement. Never had he seen such a specimen of girlhood. Ruth could not help smiling at his adoration, and she put forth her hand, which Dick took gingerly after a hasty cleansing of his own on his trousers.

It was all very different from anything the girl had experienced before. These simple people and their hearty welcome, Ruth felt that her stay among them would be happy. But already forces were at work that were to change the simple life of this young girl, forces that she knew nothing of. She had noticed in the crowd a flashily dressed individual, and now she saw her brother in the distance in conversation with the same man. The fact made her vaguely uncomfortable, and she determined to advise Tom not to make friends too easily.

Ruth would have been still more worried if she had known that the flashily looking man aspired to be the village "sport." His name was Toke, and what little money he could get together he spent in apeing the styles of the cheap "sports" in the large cities. It seemed a strange twist of fate that he should be the first person to interest Tom Judson upon his arrival in the village. Toke had quickly sized Tom up. His bluff, easy manner fascinated the younger boy, it seemed to him exactly the same that the hero affected in the story he was reading, and Tom in his surprise dropped the book which he carried under his arm. For the second time that day, his subterfuge had been discovered.

"Great stuff, kid, great stuff," Toke said as he picked up the book and laughed heartily. "Don't be afraid, I won't let on to the old man. I think you and I can be great little pals. So long, see you later, we'll arrange a nice little meeting." And with another slap on the back he strolled off whistling, leaving Tom with the idea that at last he was about to see a little real life.

Ruth drew a breath of relief when the two separated, and she turned back to the Deacon, who had stuck close to her side. They had reached Mrs. Byrd's door when a

stranger paused a moment outside of the little group. Ruth looked at him curiously. He was straight and tall with closely cropped black hair that shone in the hot sunlight. His eyes were kind, too, and as they met the girl's wide blue ones, a flicker of interest appeared in them. Mr. Judson, anxious to do the right thing, eagerly grasped the man by the hand. The man smiled curiously, and Mrs. Byrd rushed forward indignantly.

"You're mistaken, Mr. Judson," she said, her voice trembling in an effort to be dignified. "That's Hugh Lee—he don't believe in God."

The words cut their way through to Ruth's heart with a hurt she did not understand. She shivered slightly, and then lingered a moment as if there were something she would like to say. But Hugh Lee turned away bitterly, and Ruth followed her father into the house. The incident had somehow thrown a gloom over her happiness.

Sunday in the little village was scrupulously kept. Even Ruth sighed as she thought of the long afternoon when she would have to remain indoors. The day was so lovely that it did not seem wrong to worship in the great out-of-doors where everything spoke of a Divine presence. There had been a long service in the church that morning, and Ruth did not like the way the deacon had looked at her. It had made her a little nervous. This afternoon her father was to read the Bible out loud. It was a time when Tom squirmed and fidgeted, and it was impossible for Ruth to pay attention when her sympathies were all with her brother. Mrs. Byrd had told her that she had seen Tom talking with Toke again.

"Tom ought to keep away from that man," the good woman said, "he don't amount to shucks. He owes a big bill at the grocery store, and he won't work. I saw Hugh Lee giving him some money this morning. Just like the wicked unbeliever to encourage laziness."

In Mrs. Byrd's little parlor the time passed drowsily. Ephraim Judson was reading one of his favorite passages from the Bible. Tom, looking bored, was gazing absent-mindedly out of the window. Ruth kept her eyes on her father's face and listened as hard as she could. She was trying to pay the strictest attention, but her thoughts were wandering. Once she stole over softly to a bird cage which hung in the window.

"Poor little fellow," she said softly, "they keep you caged up, too." Tension had reached a point where it seemed that something must happen, when some of the church committee arrived to talk with the preacher. Toke, who had been waiting for an opportunity, slipped into the yard after them, and seeing Tom through the open window, beckoned to him eagerly. Ruth saw a sudden change come over the boy's face.

"Don't go, Tom," she begged, "he isn't the kind of a man you want to bother with."

"That's because he isn't a mollycoddle," Tom returned hotly. "You let me alone; you're only a girl. I won't have you bothering me." And with a shove he pushed Ruth aside and vaulted out of the window.

Mrs. Byrd had fallen asleep over the Bible that the evangelist had left in her care, and Ruth, after a moment's hesitation, went out into the dewy sweetness of the Summer afternoon. She had come out primarily to follow Tom, but the woods drew her, and she had not seen which way Tom had gone.

Once in the wilderness of the mountain woods, she forgot everything but the fact that she was young and alive and happy. As she picked a rose a sound of chopping attracted her attention, and she went toward it slowly, wondering who could be doing such work on the Sabbath.

The man, who was unconcernedly going about his work, stopped a moment as he spied the girl. Yesterday the look in her eyes had vaguely disturbed him, to-day he felt the same unreasonable tug at his heart. "It's Sunday," she said, simply.

He nodded curtly, and resumed his chopping. Ruth stepped a little nearer and laid her cool fingers on his arm. The movement was that of a child asking for attention, but the man felt the soft touch deeper than he cared to admit. This strange feeling vaguely irritated him, and he shook off the fingers uneasily.

"Won't you let me speak to you?" Ruth asked wonderingly. "I just wanted to ask you if it is true that you don't believe in God?"

"Yes, it's true," the man responded, straightening up and looking amusedly at the serious little face.

"But how can you help it," she asked wonderingly, "when you look around you? Look at that tree, this rose, and all the lovely country about."

He looked at it for a moment, and a bitter smile touched his mouth.

"Yes, look," he said, pointing to the flower. "A worm is eating its heart out. Look there, and there," he said, passionately, pointing to the roots of the trees. "Strange, isn't it, that God should make the trouble to make all this loveliness and then send things to destroy it all?"

Ruth faltered a little. Her simple faith did not admit of argument and logic. She just believed, she would always believe, and no amount of logic could stir the calm conviction of her girlish mind. How was she to know that while she stood trying her best to convert this stranger to her own sweet belief that her own brother was being led by Toke and a few friends into a temptation that he was too weak to resist?

He was sorely tempted to tell this child something of his life and of the canker of unrest that had robbed him of his faith. Why shouldn't he try to convince this girl

that she was wrong, that there was no God? Surely he had as much right to convert her to his belief as she had to convert him to hers.

"Didn't you pass the window this morning when I was in church?" she questioned. The man nodded.

"You didn't look hard then," the girl insisted. "Oh, you seemed different, somehow. I wanted you to come in."

"You wanted me to?" the man questioned.

"I don't know," the girl responded simply. "I just did, and I thought you wanted to."

Again the man's face darkened. "Yes, there was a reason, and again the desire to tell her arose in his mind. If he did perhaps she might leave him alone in the future. At least if her faith were well founded it would not hurt her. Above all this, however, was a strange impulse to confide in this child what he had never told another human being. It would be like opening up the past, it would hurt him unbelievably, but it would help, too, that is if she understood.

"There is a reason," he said suddenly. "If you like I will tell you, but I warn you, it's



"Won't you let me speak to you?" Ruth asked wonderingly.

Lee's eyes met those of the girl, and then left them as his glance wandered out over the country where she had been looking. He saw a girl, slim and young, standing in a church choir singing. A ray of sunshine shot across the church and rested on her hair and across one smooth young cheek.

For a moment something had welled up in his heart that she must have seen a moment later in his eyes. He had hardly known what emotion it was. It was absurd, of course, and useless, and, of course, he had strode on, careless of the question in the girl's eyes as they had met his.

Then Lee laughed a little. He remembered noticing the old deacon eye him angrily as he looked at Ruth. Was the old man making up to this child? At the thought an indignant remonstrance rose in his mind. Why, he must be over sixty, and the stinkiest old skin-flint in town. It was an outrage. Well, after all, it was none of his business whom the girl married, she was nothing to him.

"I guess it's a hopeless job, little lady," he said more kindly than he had. "I'm an infidel, and we'll just have to let it go at that."

"But why?" Ruth questioned. "There must be a reason why."

a long story and not a pleasant one. Are you sure you won't be sorry I told you?"

"Oh, if you only would tell me," the girl said eagerly. "I want so much to understand."

Lee never forgot that afternoon—the rapt look on the girl's face, the sweetness of the Summer woods, the loosing of passions in his heart that he had kept long buried, and that he had taken out of the storehouse of his memory for the hearing of this young girl who considered his soul of enough importance to save.

Hugh Lee had not always been a hermit shut up in the woods. He had not always spent his days in a struggle for existence, and his nights in a log cabin built by his own hands.

There had been a time when he was the center of a family. The Lee family was an important one in a distant city. Hugh and Bess, the two children, had always been comrades from childhood. Hugh could not remember the time when he had not taken care of Bess. She was a clinging tender little thing, and she adored her mother. When she had been a baby and Hugh just a few years older she would cry for him.

"Girls are always weaker than boys," his mother had wandered over the world seeking relief,

mother had explained gently. "They need care, you know."

And Hugh had accepted the charge and had always been his sister's guardian. When they grew up, Hugh saw nothing in other girls. Bess was his only consideration. Other girls were not so good looking as his sister, no one was such a good sport, no one fitted into his schemes of enjoyment as she did, and no one could listen with such sympathy and comfort with such words of advice as Bess could. The girl was almost as genuinely wrapped up in her brother as he was in her, but she was a mischievous little thing, and loved to tease him unmercifully. And then had come the time when she had met Franklin Lowry.

After that things were different. When Hugh wanted Bess to go out with him she was going out with Franklin. When Hugh needed Bess to talk to, Franklin had just taken her out to show her his newest car. Hugh often wondered what Bess saw in the man. Not that he wasn't a good fellow, but perfectly commonplace, and no more able to give his sister a good time than he was himself.

Finally the time had come when Bess confessed to Hugh that she was going to marry Franklin. How well he remembered that night. She had crept into his room and had curled up on the foot of his bed.

"Not that I'll ever forget you, Hugh," she whispered, "but Franklin needs me, and I do love him so much."

And Hugh swallowed up his own sense of jealousy and told her how glad he was. Afterward it had been all preparation for the wedding, and Bess was almost a stranger to him. There had been times though when she had stolen away to be with her brother, and Hugh with the knowledge that she would be home for just a short while, counted the moments as precious.

Then had come the day of the wedding. How vividly it all came up before him. The crowded rooms, the smell of flowers, the murmur of the people, and then the hush as Bess came down the wide staircase in her shining bridal white. How lovely she had looked and how good. God had never made so fair a thing.

Hugh had smiled and laughed with a sob in his throat. Of course things couldn't be the same now, but he must never let Bess see that he felt different. Bess had paused on the stairway and had thrown her bouquet backwards to the bridesmaids who clustered at the foot of the stairs, and then she had run joyously upstairs. Hugh remembered the look of rapture on her face; it was almost startling.

Bess was a joyous thing filled with the urge of life. Her happiness in her love for Franklin Lowry was almost overpowering to her. She could not realize how such a joy had come into her life, how she had happened to deserve such happiness. It all came over her as she rushed into the bedroom where a maid was waiting to help her into her travelling suit. On the bed lay her pretty things, the going away suit, and the little hat, the pretty new travelling bag filled with silver that had been a present from Hugh. Bess looked around for a moment, and then a sudden mood of exultation came over her. Here on the threshold of her new life she would kneel down and thank God for her joy.

"You may go out for a moment, Ninette," she said softly. "I will call you when I need you. I want to be alone."

The maid smiled and went out. She was French and knew how the young lady felt. Ah, how wonderful it was to be married to the man you loved.

And then had come the time for waiting for Bess to come down. Hugh remembered shaking hands with Franklin and telling him to watch over Bess.

Upstairs Bess knelt for a moment on the hearth rug and clasped her hands while she murmured a few words of prayer. Her long red velvet dress and the next minute the flimsy material had caught, and before the girl knew it she was wrapped in flames.

Downstairs the rooms were filled with gossiping people, upstairs a young girl was struggling for her life. She screamed once, and Hugh never forgot his mad rush up the stairs and his effort to get into Bess's room. The door seemed to stick, but he pushed it in finally. On the floor lay a blackened figure, ominously still and quiet. Hugh picked her up in his arms and carried her to the bed. One side of her face had been burned away, and she shuddered horribly.

Then she opened her eyes and they were filled with agony.

"I was praying," she gasped, "for joy, you know, and my veil caught, and—" there was a pause and her head dropped back. She was dead.

Hugh on his knees, his face buried in the bed clothes, was oblivious to everything. He stood up finally and looked down at the twisted, blackened thing on the bed. Then as he looked around him fiercely he encountered the calm gaze of the minister. Its placid countenance seemed to say:

"God knows best," as he placed his hand comfortably on Hugh's arm.

Hugh flung him off violently. "God!" he shrieked out. "God—there is no God!" And with hands thrown up over his eyes he flung himself from the room.

Afterward had come days when he had no care for anything except to leave far behind him the scenes that were so hateful to him. The horrible affair had smoldered in his mind. He had given up his home and his family and had wandered over the world seeking relief,



Frank Mills

Finally he had settled in the midst of the Cumberland hills.

Somehow the mountains had spelled peace to him. Their lack of austerity calmed him, for the loss of belief and the black, bitter thoughts welling up in his heart were the hardest things he had to encounter after his first wild grief had subsided. His advent into the small country town had met with little in the way of human comradeship. He was looked upon as an intruder, an outsider. He scoffed at religion; people thought him possessed with a devil. But he had remained there because he seemed more contented than he had been anywhere else. Gradually the years had softened him until his life was bearable, but as for God and religion he was done with it.

It had been a long story and the tears had welled up in Ruth's eyes more than once and rolled slowly down her cheeks as he told her. It was a terrible story, a story that might shake a strong man's faith, but which made no more impression on this simple child than if she hadn't heard it.

"I understand better now," she said softly.

"Are you sure you do?" the man questioned, eagerly.

"Yes," she nodded. "I see now why you are bitter."

"But you still believe?"

Still believe, Ruth looked at him strangely. Why, of course, she still believed. "Of course," she said softly.

"Yes, but it didn't happen to you. You're only a child, I can't expect you to see and know." The man spoke bitterly, "and I don't know whether I want you to."

"I have been trying to think how I would feel if it had happened to me," Ruth said slowly. "Oh, there must have been a reason."

Lee shook his head unbelievably. If there had been a reason, but the fact remained that there wasn't.

"Did you ever happen to think," Ruth said softly, "that her lover might not have made her happy?"

Lee looked back at her. The thought had never occurred to him.

"You see," she persisted, "God might have taken her then because she was so happy and He didn't want her to live and be miserable."

"Where did you get that idea," he asked roughly.

"But it might easily be true," the girl said softly.

Hugh Lee was thinking rapidly. Yes, it might be true. He had shut himself off from the world for so long a time that he did not know what was happening out there. And this child, that he believed so young, had given him the first piece of comfort that he had received since he had left home.

But her idea was the veriest suggestion, there was no proof that it might be true, and he did not wish to ascertain whether it was or not, his life had been lived, he had no wish to go back, it would mean but the opening of old wounds. His story that he had told the girl had taken him back and he was almost as bitter as he had been the day he came to the valley. Life was over for him so far as belief went. He didn't believe and he had no desire to believe.

"I want to thank you for telling me," she said finally, "and please don't think I don't understand. I do, and I want to be able to help you. It's not my fault that I can't, because I want to. You make it hard for me to talk to you."

Lee forced a smile to his white lips.

"That's all right. It was something to tell it to you. I wanted you to know, and I don't expect you to do anything for me."

"Will you let me say one thing more before I go?" she said softly.

Lee smiled at her question.

"Of course, I won't eat you up."

"If you don't believe in God, then you don't believe in life to come, do you?" she questioned.

"I guess I don't believe in Heaven, if that is what you mean."

"Then you don't believe that you will ever see your sister again?"

Hugh looked at the girl and the words struck deep into his heart. Did he believe that he would ever see his sister again? Of course not.

"No, I don't believe in a hereafter," he said, stubbornly.

"Then you haven't any faith in anything, how hard it must be for you to live," the girl said.

"It is hard," he burst out, "but you can't do anything for me. You'd better go home now, home to your father and brother. There's nothing you can do here, don't waste your time, when you might be converting some one worth while."

He turned away from her bitterly and lifted his axe. With strong, clean blows he went to work again on the tree. He worked furiously as though anxious to wipe out the fact that he had made a confidante of this girl, and Ruth, conscious that there was nothing more that she could do, sighed and moved slowly away.

She wondered a little at herself, at her own feelings, at her sympathy for this man. She realized that she wasn't as happy as she had been, the sadness of another life had cast its shadow over her own. Ruth wanted to help, and her inability to bring the slightest ray of comfort into this man's life troubled her more than his unbelief just at present.

Suddenly there was a great swishing of branches. Lee had chopped the trunk through and the tree was falling. Ruth turned to see what had happened and at the same time, Hugh realized that the tree was falling toward her. What a fool he had been not to have realized this.

He called to her desperately, and suddenly the girl, aware of her danger, uttered a little cry and tried to spring aside. It was too late. With a mighty groan and a splintering fall of broken branches the giant tree lay on the ground. And somewhere underneath it, was Ruth, quiet and inert.

(To be continued next Sunday)